

Tourism Performance of Balkan Countries: Travel and Tourism Competitiveness Pillars as Determining Factors

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Contemporary volatility of global macroeconomic environment necessitates governments to balance their countries' macroeconomic figures. In this unpredictable environment, tourism has been valued as a good source of foreign currency and employment. In this sense, WTTC's 2012 report indicates that over the next ten years tourism industry is expected to account for 1 in every 10 jobs on the world. To succeed this goal country should increase their capabilities and develop a competitive position to attract more tourists from around the world. In this sense, tourism performance can be evaluated as a result of using competition tools effectively in order to create a sustainable macroeconomic environment.

In this study, we use World Economic Forum's (WEF) classification of Travel and Tourism Competitiveness factors to examine resources that are expected to influence tourism performance in Balkan countries. Tourism performance is measured by two variables: International tourist arrivals and tourism receipts. Additionally, we measured competitive factors in tourism industry using WEF's classification of Travel & Tourism competitiveness factors, which consists of three sub-indexes and 14 factors that measure these sub-indexes that are reported below:

- **T&T regulatory framework** (Policy rules and regulations, Environmental sustainability, Safety and security, Health and hygiene, Prioritization of Travel & Tourism)
- **T&T business environment and infrastructure** (Air transport infrastructure, Ground transport infrastructure, Tourism infrastructure, Information and Communication Technology (ICT) infrastructure, Price competitiveness in the T&T industry)

- **T&T human, cultural, and natural resources** (Human resources, Education and training, Availability of qualified labour, Affinity for Travel & Tourism, Natural resources, Cultural resources).

Methodology

In this study, the Balkans comprises the following countries: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Greece, Macedonia, Montenegro, Romania, Serbia, Slovenia, and Turkey. In order to investigate the impact of Tourism & Travel competitiveness factors on the performance of Balkan countries, we obtained the data from The World Economic Forum's "The Travel and Tourism (T&T) Competitiveness Index" for the years between 2008-2011 that is, currently, the only available data. To reveal the relationship between aforementioned independent and dependent variables, we performed two-separate multiple regression analyses and obtained some useful insights, which are reported below.

Findings

The first multiple analysis results, in which tourist arrivals is used as dependent variable, reveal that *air transport infrastructure, safety-security, and human resources* factors are three variables that have the potential to influence the number of tourists to visit Balkan countries. The second multiple regression analysis results indicate that air transport infrastructure, cultural resources, and human resources have the greatest impact on international tourism receipts among aforementioned fourteen competition factors.

Keywords: Balkan Countries, Tourism Performance, Travel&Tourism Competitiveness Index, Strategic Marketing.